



# *Capitol Comments*

The Final Week

**Volume II, Issue 20**

**May 29th, 2015**



Today marks the end of the final week of the 84th Legislative Session. Though many legislators including myself will be working furiously through the weekend, Monday will see the legislature adjourn "sine die," or indefinitely. Additionally, two high priority bills of mine made significant progress. HB 20, aimed at increasing transparency and accountability to TxDOT project prioritization, and HB 281, which addresses the Camelot landfill situation in our district, were both passed by the Senate and are now headed to the governor's desk. When the gavel falls for the final time in three days, Texans will have been well served by the work done by the members of this legislature. I would like to thank each and every person who contacted my office during session to share thoughts on issues. Your correspondence is vital to the operation role here in Austin.

## **Floor Action**

On Tuesday night the House worked till midnight, racing against the deadline for consideration of Senate bills. The next day, we considered the final local and consent calendar. Though the clock ran out on many bills, the House was able to address key issues.

### **HB 1**

Today, the House voted to concur on the Senate amendments to the state budget. This crucial legislation allocates \$800 million to address border security concerns, and funds the state's programs for the next biennium. The \$209 billion budget represents growth of 3.6 percent in All Funds, or less than 2 percent per year, and it stays beneath the spending limit in the Texas Constitution. While restraining overall spending, it prioritizes education, transportation and border security. It also reflects the House's considerable efforts to increase transparency and accountability in state spending.

### **SB 9**

Budget transparency was improved this week with the passage of Senate Bill 9. SB 9 reforms the current method for limiting the growth on state spending. There are differences between the Senate and House versions. When this occurs, a Conference Committee is formed to try and work out the differences and agree on a final product.

### **SB 19**

A major priority item our new Texas Governor Greg Abbott laid out was to increase the transparency of the way lawmakers do business and reform related practices. SB 19, among other measures, reforms methods of campaign finance reporting, financial statements, dealing with conflict of interest, and circumstances of when a public officer may be removed from office in cases of criminal conviction. Like SB 9 mentioned above, SB 19 is being negotiated within a Conference Committee. There are many good things about this bill, as well as other provisions I don't necessarily like about it.

### **SB 11**

Senate Bill 11, which authorizes a concealed handgun license holder to carry a concealed handgun while on a college campus passed after hours of extensive debate. SB 11 allows for universities to establish rules, regulations, or other provisions concerning the storage of handguns in dorms or other residential facilities owned or operated by the university.

This bill will ensure that license holders will have the right to protect themselves on college campuses the same way they are able to in any other location in the state. The Concealed Handgun License program has been successful in Texas for almost 20 years, and today the House stood behind that program and its 825,000 license holders. To be eligible for a concealed handgun license in the state of Texas, citizens must pass state and federal background checks, pass both an educational course and shooting proficiency test, and be over the age of 21.

## Highlights

### Memorial Day



This past Memorial Day weekend the House and Senate gathered together along with Governor Abbott in honor of all the Texans who sacrificed their lives in service to this great country. The people of this country and state are forever indebted to our fallen heroes and their families. To the left are the four monuments on the Texas Capitol grounds commemorating the fallen heroes of World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

### **Legislative Intern and Aide Recognition**

Those of you that have contacted my office this session may have had the opportunity to speak with one of my outstanding Legislative Interns and Legislative Aides. Their tireless work ethic has been essential to what has been achieved this session. Pictured here are (from left to right) Matthew Hamner, Jacob Weaver, Ryan Self, Christopher Gruning, and Sarah Landsman. Each has gone above and beyond all expectations, and each has a bright future ahead of them.



## Back in the District



On Tuesday, the Lewisville Area Chamber of Commerce proudly produced the first Small Business Summit in Lewisville. Raj Daniels, a business consultant, owner, investor, and advisor was the keynote speaker at this important event. Hosting partners included the City of Lewisville, US Small Business Administration, the North Central Texas Small Business Development Center, Texas Association of Business, and SCORE Dallas. I am proud to see Texas small business thrive in my district and will do everything I can to support this important part of our local economy.

## My Bill Update

### Bills officially signed by the governor:

SB 678- Relating to coordinated county transportation authorities.

- Signed by Governor Abbott; will be effective on 9/1/15
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

### Bills Headed to the governor's desk

HB 281- Relating to a limitation on the expansion of the Camelot landfill

- Passed out of the Senate
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 20- Relating to the operations of and transportation planning and expenditures by the Texas Department of Transportation and planning organizations.

- Passed out of the Senate
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 1286- Relating to the prosecution and punishment of the offense of injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual

- Passed out of the Senate and awaiting final House approval
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 1287- Relating to a requirement that each state university's Internet website include a link to certain employment data

- Passed out of the Senate
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 1943- Relating to the indexing of correction instruments in a county index to real property records

- The identical Senate companion, SB 584, was passed out of both chambers and sent to the Governor
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 3750- Relating to interim studies on real property owned by the state.

- Passed out of the Senate
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 280- Relating to the information required to be posted by the Texas Water Development Board on the board's Internet website regarding the use of the state water implementation fund for Texas

- Has passed both chambers and was sent to the Governor
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

HB 2883- Relating to the addition of territory to a crime control and prevention district and to a fire control, prevention, and emergency medical services district

- Passed out of the Senate
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

#### Bills passed as amendments:

When the clock runs out on solid legislation, many legislators will allow their bills to be amended to accomplish the goals of the bills that the body was unable to get to in time. Below are a few of my bills that were able to pass as amendments this session. These amendments are still voted on by the House, passed through the Senate and Senate committees, and scrutinized by members in both chambers.

HB 3055- exempting certain special needs students from standardized testing

- Passed the House as Amendment No. 3 on SB 313 and awaits final Senate approval
- Click [here](#) to see the full text of the bill

HB 3167- Relating to the governing bodies of certain local planning organizations

- Passed the Senate as an amendment on HB 3474 and awaits final House approval
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

### Senate bills I am sponsoring:

SB 57 (Senator Jane Nelson) - Relating to information collected by a regional toll way authority, regional transportation authority, or coordinated county transportation authority

- Passed out of the House and awaiting final Senate approval
- Click [here](#) to see the bill analysis

### **Remaining Events and Dates**

#### High School Graduation Dates in District 65

|                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Creekview High School        | June 7th |
| Harmony School of Innovation | May 30th |
| Hebron High School           | June 6th |
| iSchool High Lewisville      | May 29th |
| Lewisville High School       | June 8th |
| Marcus High School           | June 6th |
| Newman Smith High School     | June 7th |

#### Final Day of Session

Monday, June 1st (140th Day of Session)

- The 84th Session will end when both chambers adjourn "sine die," from the Latin phrase "without day" meaning indefinitely.

#### Highland Village Business Association Breakfast- Legislative Wrap-Up

8:00 am, Thursday, June 4<sup>th</sup>

- Come join me at the Highland Village Business Association at the Highland Village Municipal Center to hear a final wrap-up of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session and what has been done to benefit businesses in our area!

A few helpful links!

Bills I have filed

Bills I have co-authored

How a bill becomes a law

Texas Legislature Online

As always, please stay in touch with me and feel free to drop by my District Office, follow me on Facebook, or find me on the House Website to hear about upcoming events.

Thank you, it is truly an honor and a privilege to serve as your State Representative.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron'.

Ron Simmons  
State Representative House  
District 65

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